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# UPADESA SARAM

OF

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

*With English Translation and Notes*

BY

B. V. NARASIMHASWAMI

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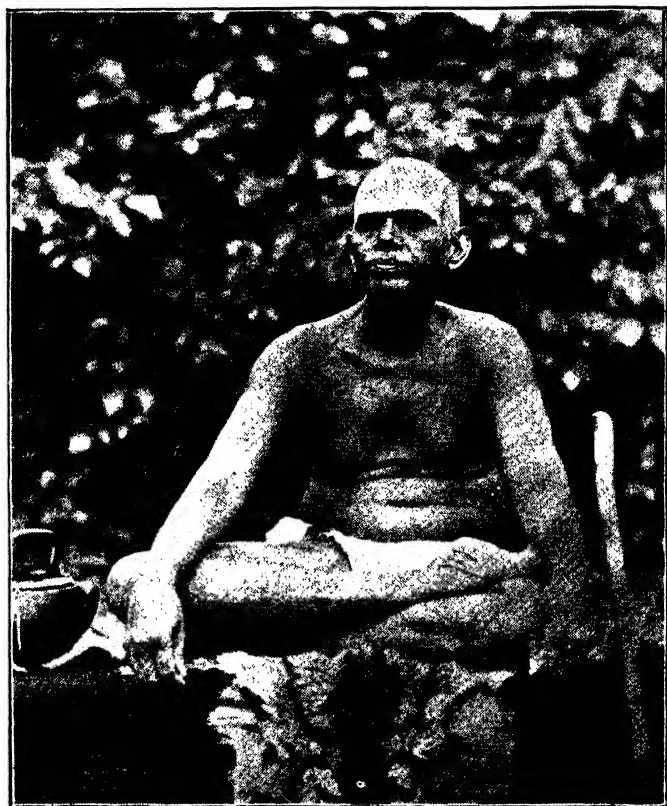
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## PREFACE

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When this work of Sri Ramana Maharshi is presented, a few words\* of introduction about his life and works may be expected. He is the son of Sundaramier, a pleader of Tiruchuzhi in the Ramnad District. Born in December, 1879, he received his early education at Tiruchuzhi and Dindigul and then proceeded to Madura where he studied in Scott's Middle School and the American Mission High School. His relatives and companions noticed nothing extraordinary about him except perhaps his occasional sleep-walking at night and absent-mindedness during working hours. The subject of this abstraction was a mystery to his companions as he did not disclose it to anyone at the time. This strange young man was proceeding, however, without any guidance from books or men, to introspect into his own personality and discover his nature. "Who am I?" "What am I?" "Whence am I?" were the queries which, even as a boy, he had started; and he had obtained distinct and frequent realisation that he was not the mere perishing body but something deep, subtle and suffused with awareness and Reality-feeling. Alongside of this untaught mysticism and philosophy, he had a deep

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\* For a fuller account, see the books noted on the cover.



and simple devotion that centered round "Arunachala." With that holy name, which haunted his memory from childhood, he associated all ideas of God—omnipotence, omniscience, holiness and kindness. He had lost his earthly father at an early age, and Arunachala was to him the "Father in Heaven." He did not know where "Arunachala" was till 1895, when a relative arriving at Madura stated that he had just returned from Arunachala. "From Arunachala!" cried the startled young man, "where is It?" The relative was surprised at his ignorance and remarked, "What! Do you not know Tiruvannamalai? That is Arunachala." With such leanings, it is no wonder that young Ramana or Venkatraman—that was his real name—took little interest in most of his studies. Neglect of studies brought on impositions and reprimands from his elders; and these seem to have produced little effect.

On 29th August, 1896, he was writing an imposition from Bain's English Grammar. The work after some time disgusted him; and he bundled up Bain and the imposition paper, and tossing them across the room, sat up, closed his eyes and dived within himself. The elder brother who was in the same room watched him in silence for a while, and then broke out with a rebuke, intended to chasten the young spirit, "What business has a fellow here, who behaves like this?" The rebuke struck home. "True," thought young Ramana,

“truly, I have no business here. I will leave home, relations and everything here, for good.” Immediately he resolved on going away to Tiruvannamalai—far from his old moorings—and remaining there totally unknown to his relations. He took three rupees out of the money given to him to pay his brother’s school fees and took train northward, leaving a note at home which ran as follows: “As I am going to seek my Father by His command, and as the object is meritorious, no sorrow need be felt for this absence and no money need be wasted in searching for *this*” (இதை). The reference in the third person to his body which others regarded as Venkatraman, to the Father who commanded him to quit home and seek Him, and the omission to sign the note are significant of the stage of development he had already reached at seventeen.

While he was in the train, he passed almost the whole of his time till he reached Villupuram, absorbed in his own thought, and unattracted by his fellow-passengers’ chat or the variegated and picturesque scenery of Nature. Finding his funds insufficient for the entire journey, he alighted at Mambalappattu and walked the distance of ten miles to Tirukkoilur where he pledged the only ornaments he wore—a pair of gold ear-rings—and again took train for Tiruvannamalai. As soon as he reached that place, he proceeded straight to the temple of Arunachala and there offered himself

with these words, "Father, by Thy command have I come here before Thee." Since then, that is, all these forty years and more, he has remained, without any break, at Tiruvannamalai in the presence of his "Father." Here the hill itself is revered as *Jyotir-Lingam*, i.e., God in the form of light.

Ramana spent the first six months in the temple precincts and then removed to a saint's tomb, a mango grove in the outskirts of the town and later still to various caves on the hill. He is now at the foot of the hill, near Paliteertha, by the side of the tomb of his mother (who came and resided with him from 1916 till she passed away in 1922). The first ten years of his life at Tiruvannamalai were characterised by rigorous *Tapas* (penance) including *Mouna* (silence), remarkable *Vairagya* (non-attachment), and an almost perpetual plunge in deep *Samadhi*. His fame as an ascetic began to spread and his relatives came to see him. They entreated hard and bade him return home. But he was adamant and declined to leave Tiruvannamalai.\* He then began to get acquainted with many religious works in Tamil and a few in Sanskrit, and as days progressed, he obtained considerable mastery

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\* Into this village, famous in song and history for the sanctity of its hill and its shrines, crowds of pious devotees, especially Saivites, have daily poured for centuries and taken a keen delight in feeding and serving holy men, in circumambulating the hill, and visiting the shrine of Arunachala. Several of these, almost from the beginning of Ramanaswami's *tapas* (i.e. austerities) have offered him their homage and some have permanently attached themselves to him so that they may serve and feed him and if possible, learn and realise the truths of religion at his holy feet.

in Tamil. He has written a few original Tamil poems,\* which are marked alike by literary grace, passionate devotion and philosophic insight; and he rendered some standard Sanskrit works† into Tamil prose and verse. His replies to disciples are embodied in *Ramana Gita*. His proficiency in other languages is evidenced by the fact that he rendered his own *Upadesa Undiyar* into Sanskrit, Malayalam and Telugu verse. The school of philosophy embodied in his works is Sri Sankaracharya's Advaita. His main discourse is on the realisation of the Self. Hundreds, and in the month of Karthika (*i.e.*, November-December) thousands, flock to pay their respects to the great soul whom they variously style Ramanaswami, Brahmanaswami, Ramana-rishi, Ramanamaharshi and Bhagavan; and some worship him as God incarnate and offer their praise, repetition of (108) names, waving of lights and food at his feet, or before his picture. Several of the visitors seek his help for solving the riddle of existence and other problems which may be vexing them. To these he offers mostly the hoary Delphic instruction: "Know thyself," "Seek the source from which you come." His works also mostly centre round the same topic.

*Upadesa Saram* is a synopsis, in thirty short stanzas, of the Maharshi's teaching about man's

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\* Arunachala Stotras, Upadesa Saram or Undiyar and Ullathu Narpattu and others.

† Sri Sankara's Vivekachudamani into Tamil prose and a part of Devikalottaram and Sri Sankara's Dakshinamoorthy stotra, etc., into Tamil verse.

spiritual course. It is constantly sung at the Ramana-Asram by the disciples along with its Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam versions and thus serves to fix in their minds the course that leads to realisation of the Self. Importance is attached to the work, not because of anything new\* in the subject-matter or its presentation, but because it is a short epigrammatic statement, by a man of realisation, as to the method and state of realisation and is well adapted for use as a manual for contemplation. For the benefit of those who have not the time, patience and desire to go through that work, at any rate without a prefatory foretaste, and for those who require matters taught to be summed up, an explanatory summary of the poem is given here.

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\* See Appendix A.

## SUMMARY

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Man wants happiness and to attain it seeks and welcomes pleasures. These he gets by 'Karma'\* i.e., activity of one sort or another. Hence to a superficial view, it may appear that activity—one's own—confers all pleasures and happiness on one, and that there is no need to look to any other or higher power. This view was acted upon by some *rishis* (*Mimamsakas*) of the Daruka Forest, who trusted entirely to their sacrificial rites to obtain all that they wanted, and failed to honour God in His highest embodiments.† In consequence of such failure, their sacrifices suffered shipwreck, and soon they had to recant their heresy. Even the slightest examination would serve to explode their theory. If they and their 'Karma' (action) did not owe their power of attaining and yielding fruit to any ulterior power, they must be the First Cause, the Prime Mover, the Great Creator, God Himself. The *rishis* did not claim Godhead to themselves; could it be ascribed to their action? Man's 'Karma', being the product of his finite intelligence, is but a feeble and unintelligent instrument. Its force is like any

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\* Karma is the intentional action of one with a moral sense, who under that sense acts as a free agent to produce a desired result.

† i. e. God Mahadeva and God Maha Vishnu.

other force, *e.g.*, that of a shell (discharged from a cannon) which is marked by some power while it moves, and reveals its full potentiality when it strikes an object—obeying therein, well-established laws—but is incapable of reflection, choice, self-direction, self-development and other features of personality, human or divine. Not ‘Karma’, nor the man that performed it, but the Great Creator who ordained the existence of man, his power to act, and the law or force compelling such action to produce its results, is to be revered.

It may be fancied, however, by some, that ‘Karma’ with its immediate and remoter \* results can satisfy the human heart. But does it? ‘Karma’ and the pleasures it yields have an end and a very quick end; they cannot provide the lasting bliss that God alone bestows. God is the goal or ‘Home’ to which humanity is drawn. ‘Karma’ or activity, as we find it in the world, *i.e.*, desire-born activity, can never take us on to that goal. On the other hand, it takes one in the opposite direction. Its product, the short-lived pleasure followed by pain, far from wiping off desire through satisfaction, gives it a fresh lease of life, an increase

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\* ‘Immediate’ result is the ‘*Vasana*,’ *i.e.*, the recoil of the action back on the agent, leaving an impression on his nature, character and tendencies.

‘Remoter’ result is the ‘*Phala*’ or fruit consisting of pleasant rewards for good action, and painful punishments for evil action. Such pleasure and pain generally take long periods to come, and seldom come during the life in which the action occurs. Sometimes, though rarely, they follow close on the heels of action, *e.g.* where it is very highly virtuous or grossly wicked.

of strength and a deeper and firmer footing in the agent's personality. Acts and attitudes tend to become habits which seize the agent with an iron grip. Desire-born acts thus tend to perpetuate themselves, not merely from day to day and year to year, but also from life to life, endlessly, as the unrepaid balance of their fruit and the unexpended fund of Desire—*Samskaras*\*—remaining at the time of death force one to take fresh birth.

### The Right Attitude

What then should our attitude be towards 'Karma' or activity? Should we or can we refrain from all action? No. Persons are always acting and impelled to act in particular ways. Their body and mind alike are bundles of *Vasanas*, resulting from the operation of well established laws in respect of innumerable past acts, and appearing to bind the individual with iron chains.† There is no need, however, for any pessimistic collapse into sluggishness. In each bundle we find intertwined, not merely the operation of laws which man cannot control, but also elements of freedom, which can

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\* *Samskaras* are the seed-forms or potentialities arising from action, which after due time begin to germinate, as desires, tendencies, aptitudes, etc. The term *Vasanas* is generally used as synonymous with *Samskaras*.

† c. f. *Bhagavad Gita*, where we find both sets presented, samples of which are given here. Those referring to the binding effect of *Karma* :—

B. G. III 5

नहि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत ।

कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥



use those laws to reshape and rearrange the bundle. The Law of Karma, for instance, that like produces like, and that individual acts tend to become habits growing stronger with exercise, is not a law to fear; it is a neutral law. If acts performed with desire for worldly objects develop

i. e. None is inactive even for a moment. All are moved to act involuntarily, (i. e.) by their innate, ingrained and natural qualities or tendencies.

B. G. III 33.

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृते ज्ञानवानपि ।

प्रकृतिं यांति भूतानि निग्रहः किंकरिष्यति ॥

Even the learned act in accordance with (i.e. under pressure of) their natural and inborn tendencies. All creatures follow their nature. What can (mere) interdiction do?

B. G. XVIII 59 यदहंकारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मनयसे ।

मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति ॥

If yielding to your ego (of the present moment) you think that you will not engage in battle, you are mistaken. Your nature (i.e. the accumulated Vasanas of the past) will force you (into battle).

*Those referring to the elements of freedom :*

B. G. VI 5. उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानम् ।

Let one raise oneself.

B. G. III 34 तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत् ।

Yield not to the sway of the two (Attraction & Repulsion).

B. G. VII (14) दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ।.....

Maya (Prakrati) issuing from me, and composed of Gunas, is hard to transcend. But they transcend her, who surrender themselves to me.

B. G. XVIII 63 विमृश्यैतदशेषेण यथेच्छसि तथा कुरु ।

Think on all this and act as you choose.

B. G. XVIII 66. सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।.....

Give up all (other) dharma, seek refuge in Me alone ; I will save you from all sin. Grieve not.

such desire endlessly, so do acts performed without such desire develop desirelessness, *l'airagya*; and so do acts performed with love of God and in a spirit of surrender to Him develop such love and spirit.

Hence to avoid the ever-lengthening chain of births and deaths, *Samsara* or the ocean of desire-born *Karmic* results, with its perpetual waves of pain and pleasure, one should ceaselessly curb desire, confine oneself to unavoidable acts and do these without attachment to their fruit; and the best practical steps to secure non-attachment are (1) to turn one's love from worldly objects on to God, (2) to surrender every object one has and even oneself to Him, and (3) to maintain this spirit of love, surrender and detachment *throughout*, *i.e.*, alike before and at the time of doing what one has to do and of reaping its fruit. With increasing success in such endeavour, one rises to one's fullest stature in God.

### **Karma Marga or Path of Works**

What are the acts generally performed for this purpose, *i.e.*, to attain the Highest? They are: (1) Worship (with the body) termed *Pooja*, consisting of ceremonial worship accompanied by external activities; (2) Worship (with the voice) termed *Japa*, consisting of praise or repetition of the holy name; and (3) Worship (with the mind) termed

*Dhyana*. External\* and internal elements are found in all these in varying degrees. This classification based thereon, though a rough one, is still popular; and Maharshi adopts it and makes a few remarks on each.

The advance of an aspirant in "inwardliness" is often noticeable by his proceeding from a grosser to a finer, from a somewhat external to a decidedly more internal form. The higher and keener one's spirit, the finer and simpler is his method of approach, his *Sadhana*. In the beginning of his turn from worldliness, an aspirant may take to ceremonial worship, especially at holy places like Kasi or Rameshwar, and be very keen on procuring numerous accessories of worship, *e.g.*, silver images, and baskets of sacred basil or 'bel'. But later, less emphasis is laid on these, and more on the praise of God with thrilling hymns and songs. Later still, even these are left behind, and bare repetition of the sacred name (*Japa*) is felt to be distinctly more advantageous and efficient. Next, this also drops off, and all the aspirant's heart and soul are poured out in a purely inward flow on God, drawing him more and more into God, and transforming his indirect and mediate perception into immediate intuition—through meditation (*Dharana*), concentration

\* The words 'external' and 'internal' are based on the supposition that the body is one's self and that the mind is something spatial, inside the brain. Though these are unwarranted assumptions, they are of use in practice to the aspirant and mystic.

(*Dhyana*), and absorption (*Samadhi*). All this is tersely summed up by Maharshi in his remark that the order of progress is : *Pooja*, *Japa*, and *Dhyana* which ends in *Samadhi*.

### Hints on Meditation

Early attempts at meditation are generally unsuccessful and result in short, broken, uneven, and taxing spells of concentration. But with bold and unflinching perseverance, one can reach the stage where meditation will be a prolonged, continuous, even, unstrained and joyous flow—in fact, it would become as natural and unperceived as respiration. Early attempts at meditation, again, are generally on some form of God—felt, at first, to be other than the meditator, and far away. But with increasing intensity of devotion, the distance diminishes\* ; and when God is literally seen everywhere and everything is seen to be but God, He is felt to be near, very near, inside oneself and finally identical with one's Self. When the idea of "otherness" vanishes, God Personal has become Impersonal ; one's ego or personal self also has become impersonal ; and both merge in "The One", "The Nameless", "Boundless Being". This truth inculcated in the schools of Advaitism or Monism is

\*Four stages of advance typifying this diminution are clearly expressed in Sanskrit, thus :—First, '*Salokya*' where the devotee is 'co-sphered' with his object of worship ; second '*Sameepya*' where the devotee is on the threshold of Divinity, thirdly '*Saroopya*' where the devotee takes on more and more the form and attributes of that object ; and lastly '*Sayujya*' where he unites with or merges in God.

amply borne out by and realised in the actual experience of Mystics\*.

### The Four Paths

As for ways and means to reach union with God or the Real, there are said to be four paths styled, *Karma*, *Bhakti*, *Yoga* and *Jnana*, which may be roughly described as (1) the Path of Works or Activity (2) of Devotion (3) of Mind Control and Union and (4) of Inquiry, Wisdom or Illumination. In practising any one of these methods, elements of the other paths are often freely mingled up. The paths coalesce. They all adopt, says Maharshi, a common slogan or formula: "Seek the Source, and rest absorbed there."†

\* The term 'Mysticism' is used in a number of senses. In this book, it is used to denote the system wherein the aspirant seeks to get and gets direct, immediate and blissful contact with God or the Real, through intuition. As an example, Lord Tennyson's mystic experience may be cited. He thus described it in a letter to Mr. B. P. Blood:—

".....a kind of waking trance, I have frequently had, quite up from boyhood, when I have been all alone. This has generally come upon me through repeating my own name two or three times to myself, silently, till all at once, as it were out of the intensity of consciousness of individuality, the *individuality* itself seemed to *dissolve* and fade away into boundless being: and this, not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, the weirdest of the weirdest, utterly beyond words, where death was an almost laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life.....I am ashamed of my feeble description. Have I not said the state is utterly beyond words? ..."

† c. f. *Brahma Sutra*. I (i) *जन्माद्यस्य यतः* which means 'Brahman (or God) is that whence all this Universe arises, in which it is supported and into which it returns,' and *Chandogya Upanishad* III 14-1 *तज्जलानिति शान्त उपासीत* — which means 'Calmly worship That as the Source, the Stay and End of all this Universe.'

## The Path of Yoga

Some observations have already been made about *Karma Marga* or the Path of Works. One may next dispose of the *Yoga Path* or at least of what is considered by some to be its chief distinguishing characteristic *i.e.*, the attempt to control mind through control of breath. One may ask what breath has to do with the mind. But it is the experience of many that an even breathing accompanies an even flow of thoughts, a ruffled breathing accompanies mental disturbance, and that an attempt to steady a ruffled mind by severe control and regulation of breath is successful. And the reason is not far to seek. The root of all spiritual success is a well developed and unified or one-pointed will ; and this development or unification can be obtained by exercising the will either about respiration or about any other matter which the will can influence. In the case of concentration on respiratory control, however, there is a great advantage. Respiration, vegetative life and thought are the outflow of one evolving life-principle ; and respiration is a matter of urgent importance for the continuance of life. Any checking or regulation of it must naturally draw the mind away from all matters over which it may be fretting or brooding. Whatever the explanation, there is the fact that breath-control leads to mind-control. But this control is only temporary. It just lulls the mind for a while, but provides no permanent cure for the mind's perpetual rest-

lessness, and until such a cure is effected, one cannot enjoy permanent peace.

### **Misconceptions and Needless Fears**

What then is the step or expedient to be adopted? Before discussing it, one may note in passing, the phrase employed to describe this permanent cure for restlessness. It is often described as *Manonasha*, i.e., destruction of the mind, and of the 'ego' or 'personality'; and these phrases have created needless confusion and terror. The reader may be assured that the aspirant is not called upon to become crazy or a lunatic or to commit mental or spiritual suicide, but rather

“ .....to hope, till hope creates,

From its own wreck, the thing it contemplates.”

The extract from Lord Tennyson on a previous page will show that personality and consciousness are not lost in the process of the highest realisation, but broadened, deepened and transformed (on such a gigantic scale as to produce at first a 'weird' impression) into the clearer and broader life of Illumination,—“the only true life,” where death is impossible. It is the 'restlessness' and other defects and limitations of the mind that are destroyed and not the mind itself or the person himself. Other phrases employed in describing this process of realisation, which might shock some, are clear references to the disappearance of God Personal and of devotion to Him, and to the apparently audacious claim of the

individual worshipper to be He—nay more, to be the Impersonal Brahman which absorbs and swallows up both the worshipper and the God he worships. There is, however, no need to be shocked. Maharshi and all mystics fully recognise that so long as the sense of duality, *i.e.* of one's being a separate individual, is retained, one must revere and worship God and that this worship itself is the means for attaining the greatest benefit. It is the experience of many mystics that the God Personal that they worship takes them on to the Impersonal Brahman *i.e.* to the apparent loss of the individuality of themselves, and of Personal God. What "true life" is (without personality, as we know it) need not frighten or worry us, when we are still in the dualist stage. Sufficient unto the day is the work thereof. Having trusted to God and to the guru, we are in safe hands—and if the guidance received takes us to the Impersonal, we feel also fearlessness and Bliss as part of that crowning achievement. That assurance is given by Scripture and is confirmed by the actual experience of Maharshi and other realisers. Spiritual guidance prepares the way to Impersonal realisation by gradation of steps which makes the change almost imperceptible; *e.g.* one is asked to worship God not as existing in a single form or body or under a single name, but in all the objects of the Universe; and when reverence is transferred to the entire universe



and all objects in it, one's religion becomes impersonal.

Another example of the gradation of steps is furnished by the life of Swami Vivekananda who was strongly under the influence of Dualism and the need for a Personal God, "a hand breadth off," *i. e.* distinct from himself—till the miraculous touch of his guru made him realise that differences of individuality are not as certain as they first appear and that the truth is that differences exist only to be swallowed up in a strange and mysterious manner in the One Real. Vivekananda for sometime clearly perceived that a cart, its horse and driver were really one, that his leaf-plate, the food thereon and himself, the eater, were one and wondered who it was that was eating.

Loss of individuality, far from being a shock to devotees, is by no means an uncommon experience among them. Many lose themselves daily in their meditation on God. A Gopi's\* intense love carried her, as Sri Krishna Chaitanya's carried his devotion, to the point of identification of the self with Sri Krishna (God). This is neither shocking nor irreligious but the height of devotion ; and hence the loss of oneself in the Impersonal is justly described by Maharshi as the perfection of Devotion.

Now for the method of securing permanent peace for the restless mind or soul : Frequent efforts

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\* A lady devotee of Sri Krishna belonging to the shepherd caste.

to secure a temporary lull have their use in preparing the mind for its final course. But the *coup de grace* that completes the course is chaining the mind or rivetting it to That which knows no change—God, Brahman, The Real or what other name one may give to That ‘Nameless.’ The weak and finite mind gets paralysed in gazing at that Infinite with awe, and “drops head foremost in the jaws” of That Boundless Being. This process termed by Maharshi *Eka Chintana*\* takes different shapes with different mystics but the result is the same—*viz.*, that already described by Lord Tennyson (which is the first stage,—with further stages to be described hereafter.†)

### Path of Devotion

As mentioned already, devotion is a powerful instrument, and in the case of vast masses, the only instrument to take them on to their spiritual goal. *Eka Chintana*, i. e. concentration on the one, in the case of devotees is on God Personal; and this is quite as efficient as any other method. Maharshi refers to it here, treating it as a very good preparation for the next Path, that of Inquiry, which is his chief method or Path.

And it is to the latter path that the main drift of this poem and of other works of Maharshi is devoted.

\* See *infra*, verse 14 of the Sanskrit version.

† See pages 30, 46, 48.

## Path of Inquiry or Illumination

(a) *Bars and Qualifications* : Maharshi does not regard any considerations of sex, age, caste, creed, race, literacy or position as bars to one's entering on this path. The only qualification demanded is seriousness, an earnest desire to learn and realise the Truth.

(b) *Discipline and Regimen* : Maharshi imposes no disciplinary regulation on the aspirant, but recognises the great value of *Iswaropasana* and *Dharmacharana*, i.e. devotion to God and ethical behaviour as valuable helps to purify and strengthen the mind. When the aspirant starts on this path, his first step is to sit quiet and draw his senses and mind away from all worldly objects. The withdrawal of the body from physical contact is fairly easy but the mind cannot be so easily withdrawn. For centuries, it has been running after desired objects and a mountain-load of the consequent *Vasanas* or tendencies has accumulated, the expulsion of which is no joke. One may close his eyes and try concentration of mind, but it jumps outward all too soon, recalling familiar images of objects of desire. In this arduous task, ardent devotion to God, beginning often with awe and fear, and supported by strictly ethical conduct\* is a great help, as it keeps

\* especially the development of the virtues known as,

शम Control of mind.

दम Control of the senses.

out attractions of the external world and fixes the mind on the one thing, pure and inspiring. This help is often mysterious and is termed *Iswara Kripa*, i.e. Grace of God. It leads one also to seek and serve a Guru; and *Guru Kripa*† i.e. grace of the Guru is a factor that greatly helps or even accomplishes Self-Realisation or God-Realisation which is the goal of this path and all other paths.

(c) *The Graded Steps* : The aspirant has to begin his practice at a quiet, clean and solitary place, free from troubles and distractions. Then he has to shut out contact of his senses with, and withdraw his mind from, external objects. The next step is to bridle that mind, totally overcoming its restiveness, and making it a docile servant that will simply carry out the behests of the higher will.

उपरति Forbearance.

तितिक्षा Endurance.

श्रद्धा Earnestness ; Faith.

समाधान Equanimity.

† *Guru Kripa* (i.e. grace of the Guru) and grace of God may appear to most people totally distinct. But to those who have thoroughly identified their Guru with God, (and even the Upanishads extol such identification) there is no distinction. The Guru's grace cannot but be God's grace; and whatever grace is received is immediately felt to be the boon of the God-Guru or Guru-God. There are degrees of grace, e.g. by the Guru's grace, vices are checked, passions are cooled down, interest in the world pales, and the mind gets sensitive enough faithfully to reflect the Real. As the last, i.e. Realisation of the Real, is the highest point of Attainment, some confine the term "grace of the Guru" to some visible or invisible act of the Guru by which perfect Realisation descends on the disciple. The more implicit one's belief in the divinity of one's Guru, the quicker and surer one's Attainment.

In practice, this is generally achieved by fixing the mind on God, *i. e.*, the form of Personal God that makes the most forcible appeal to the aspirant. But to another type of mind, the contemplation and metaphysical analysis of one's self are found more suitable and efficient. Maharshi deals with this type of mind here ; and *Jnana Vichara* or " Inquiry into Wisdom " is the name given to its progress along this line. To such a mind, when it has withdrawn itself from external contact of every sort, the most appropriate subject for contemplation is itself. Unless it is ceaselessly directed on to itself, it will fly out to objects of desire. So engage it perpetually on these questions " Who am I ? " " Whence am I ? "

These are very hard questions—which cannot be answered off-hand. They require the most strenuous attention of the concentrated mind. The attempt to face an apparently insoluble problem has a definite psychological benefit. The fore-consciousness would soon stop working at it ; but the subconscious would take it up and spend its unseen and immeasurable force on it night and day,—aided or lit up especially by faith in the declarations of Scripture confirmed by those of the Guru.

The Vedas and Vedanta have poured forth, in loud organ tones, the reply to these queries in their *Mahavakyas*, literally, " grand utterances " or gems of speech, (1) *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* : All this (Universe) is Brahman ; (2) *Prajnanam*

*Brahma* : Pure Consciousness is Brahman ; (3) *Tat Twam Asi* : That (Brahman) thou (individual soul, or aspirant) art ; (4) *Aham Brahmasmi* : I am Brahman ; (5) *Ayam atma Brahma* : This Soul is Brahman. With these ringing constantly in his ears and stored up in the chambers of the sub-conscious and gathering great momentum there, an aspirant trying ceaselessly to explore into his own nature is bound at some stage to pass into "a kind of waking trance" with his fore-consciousness apparently arrested. Then will the truth come out with its explosive force and make the aspirant see it, hear it, feel it, and be it. "That thou art" said the Scripture and the Guru. The believing soul accordingly realises that he is *That*. Faith\* has turned then into sight, vision or Realisation.

Such flashing forth of the Real is vouchsafed to very few. The majority of learners are obliged to toil through a prolonged and trying course. They have first to accept the teachings of the Guru and Scripture on trust, though to a soul without faith they may appear to be a hopeless jumble of meaningless assertions, absurdities and self-contradictions ; but as they go on gathering bits of experience and wisdom, the jumble appears to be a

\* As Swetaswatara Upanishad in its last stanza says :—"To one who has perfect faith in God and equal faith in his Guru, the inmost secrets of the Vedanta enshrined in the Upanishad flash out."

system, the absurdity appears self-evident truth; and all contradictions vanish in a blaze of wisdom.

### Hints for Practice

How is one to set about this long and arduous course? What practical hints are available to help one on the path? Maharshi reminds most people of the universally accepted truth that to a person totally unfamiliar with the way, when no way is visible, or numerous and widely divergent tracks puzzle the wayfarer, the safest course is to ask one that knows and if possible secure him as one's guide for the entire journey, and that as such a guide is termed the Guru\* (or *Marga darsaka*—shower of the path), the general run of people must early in their course prepare for, seek and obtain a Guru in whom their unwavering faith must be placed. The Guru knows which path suits the aspirant and what directions should be given and what steps taken at each stage.

If a person has heard that the *Atman* (or Self) is some glorious and blissful substratum of all that lives, moves or exists, or has read about it in the Vedas or Vedanta and wants to learn more about It and pick his way to It, he goes to some one who,

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\* c. f. Chan. Upan. 6 XIV 2. आचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद He that has a Guru knows.

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्समित्याणि: श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम्  
Mund. Up. I 2 12, To realise that, one should approach with fuel in hand, a Guru versed in Scripture, and steady in his realisation of the Self.

by repute or otherwise, is considered the most likely to know all about It and impart his knowledge to the earnest seeker. Indra,\* a god and Virochana, an asura (demon) had this desire to know and they approached their progenitor, Prajapati who told them that *Atman* is the 'self' and made them discover it for themselves by the system of trial and error. "Do you not see yourself in a mirror when grandly and joyously attired?" was the first direction given. The pupils were asked to see if the "Bodily Me," the physical body, the *Annamaya Kosha* (*i. e.*, food-sheath) was the Self. The asura was satisfied with the explanation and went his way. But the god Indra found that the body was not a source of unalloyed or permanent bliss and went back to the Guru to seek a more correct solution. He was next asked to try if the self in the dream-state was the Atman and failing that, whether his mind, reason and personality were the Atman; and when he found all these unsatisfactory, he reached the real Atman as Being-Consciousness-Bliss. The sage Bhrigu† was taught a similar lesson by his father Varuna, when he asked the latter, what that glorious, much talked of "Brahman" was. The latter described it as the "source and substratum, the stay, and ultimate goal or state of all that exists in the universe," and asked the pupil by *Tapās*, *i. e.*, the austerity of severe thinking, to discover what

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\* *c. f.* Ch. Upa. VIII 7-12.

† *Tait. Upa.* III 1-6.



that was. Bhrigu then adopted the trial and error system, and first took food to be Brahman, and next tried if life-breath, mind and intellect would be correct solutions. Failing all these, it dawned on him, that there was an indescribable state of Bliss, beyond all these four rejected forms, transcending the manifested universe, which consequently may be styled the source, stay and end of the universe; and that *That* must be Brahman.

Maharshi asks the earnest aspirant similarly to face the questions "Who am I?" "Whence am I?" Almost everyone, when asked who he is and where he is, points to his body even by touching it. The first answer then is "'I' am the body." Then he is asked to think further about himself and verify the answer. Do we not find outer sheaths or shells in nature covering (and therefore serviceable to or connected with) the inner life, but by no means to be identified with that life? Are you not feeling that you are something living and intelligent or conscious? The body, now alive, will be a corpse or a cast off slough at some time. Can it be "I" then? So the first solution is shown to be faulty. Other solutions are then tried; and one pursues one's quest of the "I" or self by rejecting mere outer appendages and excrescences, to reach its inmost reality, the essence. "Am I not the senses?" But the senses are part of and suffer the same fate as the body. "Am I not the life-breath

or life?" The pupil then is made to see that trees have life and that he is more than vegetative life. "Am I not the mind, and intellect then?" the pupil might ask, and fancy he has arrived at the truth of his self at last. But the quest is not yet ended. The mind and intellect are after all instruments wielded by something else. They are possessions which are now held, now lost, and again regained; and they are not the possessor. Then the pupil concludes that his soul *Jiva* or personality is that possessor. Then he is made to feel that his answer is right, if he dives to the heart or core of personality\* and identifies himself or his "Self" therewith. He is *That*.

What is the core of one's personality? One discovers by strenuous striving that his ultimate essence is "being". He cannot but be. At the same moment, he feels that he is awareness or aware that he "is". "I am" and "I am conscious" co-exist as two aspects of the One. Awareness exists. Existence is self-conscious. That which is, is also aware. So Being-Consciousness (*Sat-Chit*) is the core of the soul or self. Internal analysis and discovery cannot go beyond this.

Next starting to analyse the external, when one dives into its core (the Unity behind everything in the Universe), all names, forms &c. are lost.

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\* Atman (*Prattyak Atman*) is the name given to the core of personality, the ultimate residuary self that is arrived at by internal analysis.

The aspirant soul starts with its devotion to God\* and at that stage it feels that there are three entities existing,—(a) one's self, marked by intelligence and powers circumscribed within very narrow limits; (b) one's God marked by these attributes in infinite proportion, *i.e.*, without any such limits and (c) the world or universe of inert unconscious matter.

“Diving to the Core” is not physical penetration or chemical analysis; it is a drive to reach the inner essence or essential basis, by rejecting superficial adjuncts or attributes which are later developments and by that very fact shown to be non-essential. The inert universe (*i.e.*, the universe of name and form, apart from its uncreated essence) is first easily eliminated, as it is the creation or manifestation of God. Its core is taken by the Jiva to be God Personal. Next the core (1) of this Jiva and (2) of Personal God is sought and is found to be respectively (1) the Atman and (2) Brahman† or Impersonal God. Then the inquirer who has gone so far sees the identity of that Atman and that Brahman. This identity was expressed by ancient seers by the Mahavakya अयमात्मा ब्रह्म. This Atman

\* God *i.e.*, God Personal is the name applied to the empirically perceived Power whose attributes are generally agreed to be omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, kindness, love, etc., and who is pointed to as the highest from one's ethical and æsthetic nature.

† Brahman is the name given to the ultimate real arrived at by analysis of the external universe.

is Brahman, *i.e.*, The One Real is that which underlies the self within and all that is outside. The inquirer has, at this stage, reached the realisation of unity or Advaita and become really a Jnani. God is the same there as the individual worshipper. Being is felt to be the same as Awareness. Self-Realisation can be equally described as God-Realisation, as "Being That", "Knowing That" or merely "Being-Consciousness-Bliss". That is bliss, because in that state none of the pain that characterises sensation and ideas arising from the senses and the unilluminated mind can remain. It is thus *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. This is the end of the course which began with attempts to answer the questions "Who am I?" "Whence am I?": The mystic inspired with faith in the Vedas, God and his Guru arrives at the same realisation without all this ado by merely diving within himself, his "Heart" or core.\*

The first effect of such mystic diving is generally one or more temporary glimpses of that "Boundless Being" or experiences wherein the usual prosaic and finite features of the empirical self vanish for a time into brilliant and blissful limitlessness; but the aspirant comes back to his previous state or "mentality" and retains only a

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\* Maharshi has composed an inspiring Tamil song: "Ayye Athi Sulabham" in which he points out that the aspirant need not fear that the task of realising the Self is very hard and that he can very soon have direct intuition of the Self, rendering doubt impossible (of course, by the grace of the Guru).

memory of his marvellous experience. Maharshi and other realisers point out that the *final state* is that Supreme state from which there is no return,\* where that "true life" is the only life, and always persists. There is no going back from that to the old state; and it is named *Sahaja Nirvikalpa Samadhi*.†

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\* cf. B. Gita VIII 21 ये प्राप्य न निवर्तते तद्धाम परमं मम

† For further details see pages 46-48 *infra* and Mary Anita Ewer's "A Survey of Mystical Symbolism" pp. 28, 29 which describes four stages in their order of progress :—(a) Momentary mystic experience, *e.g.*, poets' lyrical inspiration (b) Mystic growth and development (c) The Divine Other, *e.g.* views of Sunrise, flight of birds, etc. (d) Abiding mystic experience of a self, unified in itself and with the Infinite.

## UPADESA SARAM

### உபதேச சாரம்

1. கன்மம் பயன்றதல் கர்த்தன தானையாற்  
கன்மங் கடவுளோ வுந்தீபற  
கன்மஞ் சடமதா லுந்தீபற.

1. *Karma* (Action) bears fruit; for, so the Creator ordains. Is *Karma* God? It is not sentient.

*Notes:* The term *Karma* has already been roughly defined (see page 7). But a closer examination of its import and implications and a fuller description are called for when starting the philosophical or religious discourse on that subject in this poem. Does that term denote (1) a state or condition of a creature or (2) the results or forces visible or invisible, issuing out of the creature in that active condition or (3) both? Sometimes it is used to denote both. Some confine it to one or the other. If the result, *i.e.*, rewards or punishments for the activity be deferred for a long time, is it, *i.e.*, (the result), to be treated during that interval as a substance or thing which is separable from and, at least to some extent, independent of the agent as the Mimamsakas among others regard it? The consequences of such a view, *e.g.*, that the fruits of *Karma* can be transferred by the person performing it, (a) by means of a resolve (*Samkalpa*) prior to the performance of the ceremonial, to another, such

as the principal (*Yajamana*) who ordered it to be done, or (b) by a subsequent oral act or otherwise to any person at the will and pleasure of the agent are freely accepted by many persons of the Hindu and other communities without regard to the theory implied in such acceptance. A third question about Karma is: "Granting that God is the ultimate cause, the Prime Mover responsible for any act producing its moral (or even physical) consequences, does God operate by individual exercise of will in each instance, or only by general laws, and if the latter, does He interfere with their operation in individual cases?" These and numerous other questions arise, as the subject has nowhere been fully and systematically dealt with in any single work of the Hindu Sastras. Whatever the answer to these questions, we may first consider what the doctrine of Karma is and how it is applied.

The doctrine of Karma has thus been summed up\*: "Every exercise of the will-power, in thought, speech and action, acts as a moral cause, and confers on the agent an amount of merit or demerit according to the nature of the act performed; and this moral effect influences the subsequent fate of the individual concerned."

"The doctrine of Karma" is thus an ethical or religious doctrine. It has no application to merely "mechanical acts" which do not (or in so far as

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\* See H. D. Bhattacharya's "Vicissitudes of the Karma Doctrine" in the Malaviya Commemoration Volume, published by the Benares Hindu University.

they do not) involve moral considerations. Such "mechanical acts" bear fruit which is (a) visible (b) obviously connected with the act (c) affecting, as a rule, other or external objects, and not the agent (whether a person or a creature) (d) independent of the intentions of that agent, and (e) consequently involves no questions of moral judgment upon or reward or punishment to that agent in future births. Maharshi uses the word Karma to denote only such acts as are ordained, sanctioned, or forbidden by the scriptures. The doctrine of Karma is chiefly used in Indian Philosophy to explain the otherwise inexplicable inequalities found in society, and the strange but by no means infrequent spectacle of good men suffering apparently undeserved and inexplicable pain and sorrow, and evil men enjoying apparently undeserved pleasure or happiness. The explanation is given by reference to acts said to have been performed in other births. Thus the Doctrine of Transmigration is closely associated with the Doctrine of Karma.

This and some other purposes, within very definite limits, are served by the Doctrine of Karma. But there are some\* who ignore these limits, greatly exaggerate the power of Karma, and in fact

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\* Among these, as one may naturally expect are atheists and agnostics such as the adherents of some schools of Buddhism. But Maharshi is not addressing such persons in this poem. The persons intended to be benefited by it (i.e., the *Adhikaris*) are theists with belief in God and the Vedas.



make a fetish of it. As mentioned already certain Mimamsaka rishis, hankering after certain temporal benefits, hoped to attain them merely by the adoption of the prescribed Vedic rites in a spirit of self-sufficiency. God (or Mahadeva and Maha-Vishnu) came down and prevented the proper performance and completion of the proposed sacrifices, and thus taught them the truth (of B. G. XVIII v. 14) that beyond present human effort, there is an element of Divine control (दैवं) in all affairs to account for their success or failure. Yet we find certain verses like those of Bartrihari ब्रह्मायेन कुलाल-वन्नियमितो and some popular *niti slokas* like, हरिणापि हरेणापि ब्रह्मणापि सुरैरपि । ललट लिखितारेखा परिमार्ष्टुं नशक्यते ॥

Such attempts to limit God's Omnipotence and depict Karma as superior to God are ludicrous. Maharshi strikes at this delusion with a simple question. Is this power of Karma inherent in itself?—in which case, it will be God itself. Is it contended that Karma is God itself? Why, Karma is one of the states or attributes of God's creatures and consequently Karma is created by God, see B. G.\* Surely it is ridiculous to impute superiority to creation over the Creator.

यज्ञार्थात् कर्मणोन्यत्न लोकोयं कर्म बंधनः ।

तदर्थं कर्मकौन्तेय मुक्तसंगः समाचर ॥ (9)

सह यज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः।

अनेन प्रसविष्यध्व मेषवोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥ (10)

2. வினையின் விளைவு விளிவுற்று வித்தாய்  
வினைக்கடல் வீழ்த்திடு முந்தீபற  
வீடு தரவிலை யுந்தீபற.

2. The results of *Karma* (Action) pass away, and yet leave seeds that cast the agent into an ocean of *Karma*. *Karma* yields no salvation.

*Notes*: One may agree with the view stated in verse 1 that action (*Karma*) is not God and is insentient and yet feel that (without worshipping action) one may get all the pleasure or happiness that one naturally longs for, by appropriate action. To such a person this verse gives the answer.

Such a person is called upon to pause and reflect on the experience of himself and others. One must think clearly, accurately define the terms used and give oneself correct self-direction. Do pleasures come unalloyed? Do they last long? Are pleasures—or even a good number of them massed together, the same as human happiness? Is happiness the same at all levels of development? Pondering over these questions, with the help of the

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देवान्भाव यतानेन तेदेवा भावयन्तु वः ।

परस्परं भावयन्तः श्रेयः परमवाप्स्यथ ॥

इष्टान्भोगान्हि वोदेवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।

तैर्दत्तान्प्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्तेस्तेन एव सः ॥ B. G. III 9—12

The Gitacharya thus declares that *Karma* is God's creation; that *Yajna* (*Karma*) i.e., action after surrender alone is safe as it does not result in bondage, that such (*Yajna*) *Karma* should be performed to please the gods (who are the organs of the One God) who will bless the sacrificer with the enjoyments prayed for and that enjoying these after *Yajna* frees one from *Karma*.

experience of numerous persons, one sees that pleasures are ever alternating with pains and are all too brief. Pleasures satisfy or seem to satisfy man at his lower or animal level, but soon he sees that they are the result of titillation of senses that wear out, that they sooner or later pall upon the taste and yet leave a sense of unsatisfied, perhaps insatiable hankering, and that happiness is distinct from pleasure, and has various grades,\*—rising from the lowest human unit, through various angelic grades to Divine Bliss—which is the “One...divine event to which the whole creation moves.”

Increasing experience shows that yielding to the love of pleasure and taking active steps to grasp it are not the way to real happiness, that sacrificing the desire, (especially in an effort to benefit others) often yields more pleasure and happiness, that higher grades and forms of happiness involve greater and still greater sacrifice of desires, and that perfect selflessness *Akamahatasya*\* is the highest happiness one can attain.

Hence Maharshi says that active pursuit of pleasure (which after all is short-lived) endlessly multiplies the seeds of desire in one's soul, entirely corrupts it and takes it away from the grand goal of selfless Divine Bliss to which all sentient creation tends.

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\* For a fuller statement of these, see the Ananda Mimamsa in Tai. Upa. 2 VIII and Bri. Upa. 4 III 33.

effect of activity on such lines will be gradually to diminish and finally to wipe off all selfishness, the mark of the brute level and lead one Godward. As man identifies himself with his desires and the object of his desires, these form his self at each stage. So by following the directions given here,

“ Men may rise on stepping stones  
Of their dead selves, to higher things ”—  
and to the Highest.

This is progressive self-realisation ending in realisation of God, Atman, or Brahman.

4. திடமிது பூசை செபமுந் தியான  
முடல்வாக் குளத்தொழி லுந்தீபற.  
வுயர்வாகு மொன்றிலொன் றுந்தீபற.

4. This is certain. Bodily worship (*Pooja*), vocal worship (*Japa*) and mental worship (*Dhyana*) are performed (mainly) with the body, the voice and the mind; and they excel each other in the above order.

*Notes* : *Pooja* is any ceremonial act of worship.

*Japa* is the repeated utterance of God's name or holy *mantras*, and is here used to include praise (*Stotra*).

*Dhyana* is meditation; pp. 11-13 explain the order.

5. எண்ணுரு யாவு மிறையுரு வாமென  
வெண்ணி வழிபடலுந்தீபற  
“ ருற் பூசனை யுந்தீபற.

5. Viewing this eight-fold universe as the expression or manifestation of God, whatever worship is performed is excellent worship of God.

*Notes* : 'Eight-fold',—the universe is said to consist of eight parts, *viz.*, of the five "elements" (ether, air, fire, water and earth) the Sun, the Moon and the *Jivas* (*i.e.*, individual souls). God manifests Himself as, in or through the Universe. The purist or iconoclast, in his anxiety to think of God as Pure Spirit, *i.e.*, as the exact opposite of matter or form, tries to avoid in his worship, any thought of the material universe and its forms. But what is the result? He thinks of God in terms of light, in the form of a dove, or of a person under a crown of thorns (typical of pain and sorrow), or as a powerful and benevolent father. Why? Spirit is known to us only through matter and its forms. The seeing spirit can only see through its own spectacles. Thought can issue out only in and through moulds of matter; and Symbolism and Anthropomorphism are inevitable. Human brains cannot escape the employment of forms in thinking of the formless spirit; and hence the universal use (acknowledged or unacknowledged) of forms in worship. Indiscriminate condemnation of such use betrays only ignorance and intolerance. Humanity needs forms and symbols for self-expression, especially in the field of religion, and the Deity in Its omnipresence, omniscience and kindness is sure to

accept the devotion so expressed. The wise teacher, guide, or controller should only see to it that in the act or process of worship, the devotee's mind is made to rise from a perception of the narrow limitations, and petty features of the form or object used for worship, to a perception of God's spiritual nature, freedom from limitations, and other grand attributes. Processes employed vary widely; but, almost invariably, they include the *Avahana* (i.e., Invocation) or "Practice of the Presence of God" in the object or place of worship. To the pious, that object (which others may view only as a piece of matter) is really Spirit,—is felt to be God.

The earnest devotee thinks and must think, while carrying on such worship, that God is immanent in the entire universe and every part of it; and if he actually *realises* His presence, the worship of the entire Universe (*Virat Rupa*) or parts (e.g., a saint or an image) is undoubtedly worship (and a good form of worship) of God Himself. In order that the worship should be real and such as to reach God, there must be the actual feeling of God's presence with its usual concomitants or consequences, e.g., awe and reverence (*mysterium tremendens*), or love, etc., which, at their intensity, result in absorbed (or "infused") contemplation. By such absorption, man becomes what he adores and loves. He is, in the ultimate analysis, himself but an idea or state of consciousness. So also is the object of worship. Intense contemplation and

absorption assimilate, and fuse, *i.e.*, merge the two in one. And the object of all worship is to merge in the Blissful One.

6. வழத்தலில் வாக்ஞ்ச வாய்க்ஞட் செபத்தில்  
விழுப்பமா மானத முந்தீபற  
விளம்புந் தியானமி துந்தீபற.

6. The repetition aloud of His name is better than praise. Next comes faint mutter. But the best is the repetition within the mind—and that is meditation, above referred to.

*Notes:* The repetition of His name is more helpful to concentration than elaborate praise which distracts at some stage. As concentration advances, the voice gradually sinks within. Then silence crowns it all.

‘Meditation’ may be on God, Personal or Impersonal, as a separate being or as the inmost core of oneself.

7. விட்டுக் கருதலி னுறுநெய் வீழ்ச்சிபோல்  
விட்டிடா துன்னலே யுந்தீபற  
விசேடமா முன்னவே யுந்தீபற.

7. Better for progress than broken thought is its steady and continuous flow like the flow of oil or of a perennial stream.

8. அனியபா வத்தி னவனக மாரு  
மனனிய பாவமே யுந்தீபற  
வனைத்தினு முத்தம முந்தீபற.

8. The attitude “He is I” is preferable to the attitude “He is not I”.

*Notes:* In the Sanskrit version of this poem, composed by Maharshi, he uses the phrase “is considered purifying” in place of “is preferable.”\* The Sanskrit “Soham”, which means “He is I” is a well-known expression. It is used by the Advaitin to denote the unity and identity of that which is spoken of in the first person (I) and that in the third (He). Naturally, the second person and everything in the universe is also considered to be ‘He’—a term which the Advaitin uses frequently to denote *Brahman*—the Reality underlying everything. “Soham”, thus in Advaitic practice, is the key mantra, constant meditation on which will help the individual to identify himself with the universal soul or Brahman, which identification or merger is the Advaitic conception of mukti (release) or salvation.

“Soham”: or “He is I” and “Hamsah” or “I am He” are used by Dualists to express the intensity of Devotion which leads the devotee completely to forget himself or herself in intimate union with God, like the water of a river when it reaches

\* *Cf.* Bri. Up. I (4) 10. य एवं वेदाऽहं ब्रह्मास्मीति स इदं सर्वं भवति. तस्य ह न देवाश्च ना भूत्या ईशते. आत्मा ह्येषां स भवत्यथोऽन्यां देवता मुपास्तेऽसावन्योऽहमस्मीति न स वेद यथा पशुरेव स देवानाम्.

*i.e.*, He who knows himself as Brahman, becomes all this Universe. Over him the gods have no lordship. He is their very Atma. He who worships any other (except the Self) regarding himself as different from that, knows not. He is but an animal (of sacrifice) to the gods.



the sea, or like salt in water—and this is the dualistic conception of mukti. A Gopi passionately loving Krishna forgot her identity for a time and declared that she was Krishna. So did Lord Gauranga.

Comparisons are often declared to be odious—especially if they are between the tenets and favourite practice of different sects. It may therefore be pointed out that Maharshi is hitting neither at the Dvaities (Dualists) nor at the retention of the element of personality in worship, which is strongly stressed especially by that class. Maharshi himself began with and still retains his devotion to Arunachala or the God worshipped at Tiruvannamalai and has composed several poems in His honour clearly retaining the personal element in them. Logical analysis of Personality no doubt implies elements that differentiate the person from all else. Yet there are ways of treating personality in worship so as to minimise or abolish those differences, *cf* Aksharamanamalai wherein Maharshi appeals to Arunachala to merge him (Maharshi) in Himself. Dualists also have a very high place for “Non-Difference” as may be seen from the examples given above. The objections to some lower forms of personal worship are that they involve (1) interruption, (2) adulteration and (3) condition. Where none of these objections apply, the worship even by Dualists is in the form of Non-Difference and is excellent.

The attitude, "He is not I" is that of the ordinary worshippers, who are almost always dualists, in fact, whatever creed they may profess. Their mental constitution at their early stage leads them to value personality in God and in themselves. But some of these, by force of heredity, Guru's teachings, etc., keep the Advaitic goal at the back of their minds, even from the beginning ; and by force of suggestion, at long last, they move from their original Personal God to Impersonal worship, *i.e.*, transcend personality in their God and in themselves. This process is dealt with in the next verse.

9. பாவ பலத்தினுற் பாவனா தீதசற்  
பாவத் திருத்தலே யுந்தீபற்.  
பரபத்தி தத்துவ முந்தீபற்

9. Remaining in the Real Being, transcending all thought, through intense devotion is the very essence of Supreme Bhakti.

*Notes :* 'Bhakti' is Faith or Devotion. Thought involves a subject thinking, the object of thought and the thinking process, perceived as three distinct factors known as the *Triputi*. The highest reach of abstraction gets beyond these three and beyond the two (created soul and the creator) into the One. Maharshi in this and the previous stanza is connecting the two, Bhakti and Jnana, *i.e.*, Devotion and Illumination. As they are seen to be the same at the end of one's course, Maharshi often

says that Bhakti is Jnana and Jnana is Bhakti—a truth clearly brought out by Sankaracharya's definition of Bhakti.

स्व स्वरूपानुसंधानं भक्तिरित्यभिधीयते ।

स्वात्मतत्त्वानुसंधानं भक्तिरित्यपरे जगुः ॥

Vivekachudamani 32 & 33.

which means :

Concentration on the nature of the Self is said to be Bhakti by some ; others say it is Concentration on the truth of the Atman.

In these two stanzas, Maharshi shows how one who starts devotion with a sense of difference between himself and God, loses the difference, in the intensity of his mood, and arrives at non-difference. That is Jnana and that is the essence of the highest devotion.

10. உதித்த விடத்தி லொடுங்கி யிருத்த

லதுகண்மம் பத்தியு முந்தீபற

வதுயோக ஞானமு முந்தீபற.

10. " Absorption into the source " or core of Existence (or the Heart) is what the paths of Karma, Bhakti, Yoga and Jnana teach.

Notes : This maxim is in Chan. Up. III 14, 1 and B. S. I (1) 2. See footnote to page 14 ante. The four paths are not mutually exclusive. Stanzas 1 to 9 deal with Karma and Bhakti ; 10 to 15 with Yoga ; and 16 to 28 with Jnana :

In Srimat Bhag. XI only three paths are said to exist *viz.*, Jnana, Bhakti & Karma.

योगास्त्रयो मया प्रोक्ता नृणां श्रेयो विधित्सया ।

ज्ञानं कर्म च भक्तिः च नोपायोऽन्योस्ति कुत्र चित् ॥

Some go further and deny that Karma Marga is anything more than a step to the other paths.

“ *Be absorbed in the Source.*” The devotional mind of the Bhakta easily finds God Personal as the undoubted source of himself and of everything else and endeavours to get wholly absorbed in Him and thus he attains his goal. The analytical introverted Jnani with his strong leaning for Metaphysics proceeds to inquire into the source and nature of himself and all other things in the Universe, and arriving at the Ultimate Real underlying both, (Atman-Brahman) seeks to realise himself as That, *i.e.*, to merge or lose his finite individuality in That. The Yogi with a practical bent of mind turns to the details of Sadhana enabling the devotee or inquirer to concentrate on God Personal or the Impersonal Atman-Brahman and chalks out a course of self-discipline, the breathing exercises and other physical and mental steps that enable the mind to attain steadiness and absorption (*Samadhi*) in God or Atman-Brahman. The votary of the Karma Path also aims at that ultimate absorption and absorbs himself meanwhile in the performance of various acts that will take him to that goal. All these paths prescribe the formula—‘ Search and find the origin of yourself, and be absorbed in that.’ Stanzas 11

to 14 deal with absorption ; and 19 to 21 deal with search for the source.

“ *Source* ” : This term denotes the ultimate Real, the Brahman from which metaphysicians deduce the existence of everything. The definition of the term “ Brahman ” by Varuna to explain it to his son Bhrigu in order to enable him to discover it for himself with the help of such definition, ran thus : यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते etc. “ Brahman is that whence all these creatures in the universe have issued, that whereon they are sustained and that into which they return,” i.e., source, stay and goal of the universe. Mostly this definition is regarded as indicating the Impersonal Absolute, the Real, Pure Consciousness and That alone. Some regard it as applying to Personal God ; some apply it to both. After all, these slide into each other.\*

For this term, “ *Source* ” (*Uditha Idam*). Maharshi uses the word “ *Hridaya* ”, i.e., ‘ Heart ’†

\* c. f. वदन्ति वेदविदस्तत् तत्त्वं यत् ज्ञान मद्रूपम् ।

ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्द्यते ॥

i.e. Knowers of the Vedas call Pure Consciousness, which alone exists, the Real or the Truth. That is also termed Brahman, (by the Vedantists), Paramatma (by the Yogis and in Smritis) and Bhagavan (by the devotees).—*Srimat Bhagavata*.

† C.f. B. G. VIII 12. मनोहृदि etc., i.e., bundling up and lodging the mind in the heart. That refers to one stage of Yoga and is followed by another raising the Self or Prana or Manas to Murchha, i.e., head or Sahasrara Chakra. Hridaya, therefore, may be taken there as denoting Anahata Chakra.

in his Sanskrit version of this verse. But that term is nowhere used in this Tamil poem. Yet on account of its frequent use in religious (especially mystic) literature, we shall briefly deal with it here. 'Hrit' or 'Hridaya' is a Sanskrit word having different senses and the transition from one sense to the other is obviously due to the belief in their identity or close connection. The first sense of the word *Hridaya* is the organ known to Physiology as the blood propeller. This was (and even now is) identified with the central and essential activities of human existence and was treated as the central source of 72,000 nerves radiating therefrom to all parts of the body. So another sense of the term Heart or *Hridaya* is that which is the essence of Human existence, *i.e.*, the Atman-Brahman, the ultimate and only Real of Advaitic Metaphysics (see Chan. Up. VIII (3) 3 and verse 20 of Sanskrit Up. Sara). Thus the term has one use in Physiology and another in Metaphysics. Various thinkers and mystics have had a variety of experiences in their efforts to realise the bliss of merging themselves in the ultimate Real. For their mystic purposes they fixed and do still fix their attention on some spot in their chest, as the ultimate or temporary resting place of their ego. They have recorded their experience that alike in deep sleep and

samadhi,\* the Jiva or empirical ego was felt to sink into the central spot of the chest which they termed the heart.

\* Deep sleep and samadhi strongly resemble each other in a very important particular, i.e., the disappearance (entire or practically entire) of the Ego consciousness, with the consequent blissful feeling of repose. In Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad they are described in the same or almost the same phrases. Bri. Ar. Up. II (1) 17 to 19 say that in deep sleep the Jiva previously full of conscious activity passes [along with Prana (life) sight, hearing and mind] into the 72,000 nerves, which pass from the heart and its pericardium and connect them with all parts of the body, and through those nerves into the Ether of the Heart, and blissfully rest there like a boy or a monarch or a Maha Brahmana. Chand. Up. VIII (6) 3 refers to the resting of the Jiva during deep sleep in those nerves, (i.e., really in the heart to which they lead, see B.S. III (2) 7 to 9.)

Tait. Up. I (6) ; Katha. Up. VI 17, IV 12 6 ; III 12, Mundaka Up. III (1) 5, among numerous texts describe Brahman as residing in the ether of the heart or in the cave or in the body generally.

In many vernacular treatises it is baldly stated that Jiva resides in waking in the brain and proceeds to the heart in deep sleep and joins with Brahman there in samadhi ; c.f. B. G. VIII 12, 10 & 13 ; X 20 ; XIII 31 & 33 ; XV 14 & 15 ; XVI 18 ; XVII 6 and XVIII 61.

The Bible (Ecclesiastes Ch. 10 verse 2) states that "A wise man's heart is at his right hand ; but a fool's heart at his left." Here, at least in the first half of the sentence, the term "heart" may have been used metaphorically.

"The Sufi Mystics" (says Mr. Shushtory in his recent *Islamic Culture*, Vol. II p. 474) "are agreed in their view that Qalb or hearts are three, one physical on the left side, another called the animal soul, on the right side ; and a third between the two, praised by Sufis as a spiritual faculty—a kind of mirror in which the Supreme Will is reflected. It is by keeping this heart pure from worldly attachment that a human being can approach the Creator. The real knowledge is God's illumination of this heart. The divine revelation to the Prophet is impressed on this heart. As is said in the Quran 'The faithful Spirit (i.e., divine messenger) has descended with it (revelation), upon your heart that you may be of warners' Ch. XXVI 193—194 "

The Hindu Sastras do not assign any place to the source of illumination. Yoga Vasishtha V Upasama Prakarana Ch. 78 32—37 verses say that there are two hearts—one the gross

11. வளியுள் ளடக்க வலைபடு புட்போ  
 லுளமு மொடுங்குது முந்தீபற  
 வொடுக்க வுபாயமி துந்தீபற

11. As birds are caught with nets, so by holding the breath, the mind is restrained and absorbed. This (breath-regulation) is a device for effecting absorption.

*Notes:* Pranayama (breath-regulation) is a means and only one of the means adopted to secure a temporary lull in the mind's activity.

12. உளமு முயிரு முணர்வுஞ் செயலு  
 முளவாங் கிளையிரண் டுந்தீபற  
 வொன்றவற் றின்மூல முந்தீபற.

12. For, mind and life (*Prana*) expressed in thought and action diverge and branch. But they spring from a single root.

which may be ignored (by the seeker after illumination) and the second, the Brahman which is taken by the Jiva (for the mystic purpose of realising itself by contemplation as the Blissful Real) as both inside and outside and neither inside nor outside the human body, i.e., which may be taken to be either non-spatial or pervasive of all space, or residing at any particular spot. Maharshi's experience in practising his mystical process of Realisation, has been repeatedly stated by him, viz., that the ego is felt to sink into the right side of the chest with something like a jerk or shock when samadhi begins and to re-emerge from there at the cessation of samadhi, with a similar jerk or shock.

Undue importance should not be attached to this location of the "Heart" or the variations therein. Each group following its own variation derives its usual and expected benefit. The "Heart" as signifying Brahman is the only matter of importance; and that though unconnected with space or the body is reached through mystic sadhana of some sort or other locating the mind or self in particular parts of the body.



*Notes :* This verse explains why breath-regulation controls the mind. (See pages 13 & 14).

13. இலயமு நாச மிரண்டா மொடுக்க

மிலமித் துளதெழு முந்திபற

\* வெழாதரு மாய்ந்ததே லுந்திபற.

13. Absorption has two forms, *viz.*, *Laya* and *Nasha*. That which is merely absorbed in *Laya* revives; if dead, it revives not.

*Notes :* *Laya* is temporary absorption; *Nasha* is permanent.

The absorption described in the 11th stanza is temporary. The spiritual aspirant cannot rest content with that. He must proceed to *Manonasha*, the permanent absorption, described in 14th & 15th verses.

*Manonasha*, *i.e.*, literally death of the mind does not really mean becoming insentient, lunatic, delirious; etc.

*Manonasha* means the loss of the present form of the mind with its narrow, obstructed and distorted vision preventing a person from seeing himself to be really the Atman and forcing him to identify himself with the body more or less completely. The loss of that form is really a gain as it means the transformation of the finite and distorting mind into Pure Consciousness, Perfect Reality, the Atman or Brahman, embracing everything and leaving nothing outside Itself.

If the term *consciousness* in 'Pure Consciousness' is taken as necessarily implying the existence of "mind" in some form, then it may be correct to say that in the entire course from the noviciate to the state of realisation, a person is never without a mind.

In fact, we find, in religious literature, expressions referring to the mind of a jnani or Jivan Mukta. Great Saints themselves have given us personal hints on this matter that are of great value. They refer to their enjoyment of bliss in the Sat-Chit-Ananda state and declare it to be ineffable. But the fact that they enjoy bliss and remember it after moving out of that state shows that they retained in that state their ego with powers of enjoyment and memory. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa explained, that the mind in that state was like a thin line drawn on water, having a fugitive existence, or like a rope burnt to ashes. Such a rope retains the form and appearance of a rope; but one cannot bind anything with it. Such a mind is described as in *Suddha Satva*. Even this perhaps requires a slight modification, in view of the Gita statement\* that there is nothing in existence without the admixture of the three Gunas. The description of the Saint's mind as in *Suddha Satva* is right because therein the Satvic element preponderates so overwhelmingly over the other elements as to drown them or blot them out of view, if not out of exist-

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\* B. G. Ch. XVIII v. 40.

ence. The saint is so gentle, (*sarala*) so satvic. His will is surrendered. He has no attachment or desire and his deeds do not produce any *vasana* or bondage like those of worldly persons. There is a doctrine of "substantial compliance" in Spirituality as in Law. Neither Religion nor Law takes note of trifles. Even in Physical Science, what is substantially a vacuum (*e.g.*, that obtained by an air pump) is treated as a vacuum and is found for all practical purposes to be a vacuum. This parallel may well be used in understanding the term "Satvic mind of the Jivan Mukta" and also perhaps the phrase "the jiva that without suffering extinction, transcends personality, and again returns to personality."

14. ஒடுக்க வளியை யொடுங்கு முளத்தை  
விடுக்கவே யோர்வழி யுந்தீபற  
வீயு மதனூரு வுந்தீபற

14. When the mind can get absorbed, by breath restraint, then it will "die," (*i.e.*, its form will perish) if fixed to a single point.

*Notes:* The aspirant should not be content with Pranayama (breath regulation) which stills the mind only so long as the breath is held. He should proceed to "kill it." That is done by unflinching perseverance in concentration—on the Supreme.

"Death" of the mind (or even its temporary absorption) is termed *Samadhi*. The highest form

of it is the permanent merger or union of the individual in the Brahman. All other forms are inferior. There is, however, a gradation among them. (1) *Sushka*, (*i.e.*, barren) Samadhi and Yoga Samadhi are terms applied to certain types of voluntary trance or stupefaction of the senses and the mind, produced by psycho-physiological or spiritual gymnastics, in which however Atman, Brahman or Satchitananda is neither realised nor approached. Even this, if properly utilised, may be a good preparation for real and even the highest Samadhi.

Absorption of the mind is a fine art. But its value depends on what one is absorbed in. Absorption in a mathematical problem, in music, or in love has its value for the joy that it gives and for the preparation it affords for absorption in the Supreme. Absorption in one's *Ishta Devata* or Personal God (achieved mostly with the aid of images or other symbols such as light and fire) is really absorption in love—a refined or sublimated love—and is the next higher step. That is termed (2) *Savikalpa* Samadhi. So long as the mind perceives things other than itself it is having *Vikalpas* or differentiating processes. When these are narrowed down to a very few objects, *e.g.*, one's God with some attributes or His symbol, it is *Savikalpa* Samadhi. This, many devotees are enjoying in the course of their worship or other devotional exercises.

Very highly intense devotion, however, leads one to lose his individuality in one's God. Then it becomes (3) *Nirvikalpa* Samadhi—one shoreless sea of undifferentiated consciousness, which it is impossible to describe. We can only try to hint at it by saying that there one's self has become God, that God Personal has easily passed into His essential nature that is termed Impersonal Brahman and that the feeling at its threshold is that all differences appear, merely to be consumed and absorbed in unity, or do not appear at all.

When glimpses of such realisation are caught and enjoyed for a time and there is a return to the previous or preparatory state or stages, these glimpses are termed (3-a) *Kevala Nirvikalpa* Samadhi.

There the *Vasanas* (of the individual), though subdued for the time being, are still alive and they drag him back into the lower stages, and will continue to do so till they are thoroughly and completely extinguished.

After the exhaustion of the *Vasanas*, the individual (?) is in (4) the *Sahaja Nirvikalpa* Samadhi. He is in permanent realisation of the Self or Brahman, *Thanmaya Nishtha*,\* and there is no return from that state. What people call "his body" will remain living and active with its senses, and intellect till the course of action for which that

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\* Literally means being established in Being That.

body came into existence (*Prarabdha*) is over. But this is the view of the on-lookers. The realiser does not any more identify himself with that body or its activity and feels no attachment or concern with its activity or inactivity or the attendant pleasure or pain. This is what the next verse states :

15. மனவுரு மாயமெய்ம் மன்னுமா யோகி  
தனக்கோர் செயலிலை யுந்தீபற  
தன்னியல் சார்ந்தன னுந்தீபற.

15. The great yogi whose "mind is extinguished" and who rests in Brahman, has no karma, as he has attained his true nature (Brahman).

Notes :—*c.f.* B. G. III 17, 18 Bri. Up. IV. (iv) 12. He feels no need or desire for Karma. When it is performed, he does not feel that he is the actor. The results do not affect him. So it is said that he has no Karma. The bondage of Karma does not affect its creator God, Personal, or Impersonal nor the Self-Realiser in his *Thanmaya Nishtha*, state of realisation.

God's and Jivan Mukta's acts may seem to be like worldly persons' acts, but are really *sui generis*, and produce no such results, nor do they recoil; *e.g.*, the first act of creation, subsequent acts of creation and incarnations (*Avataras*) are not the result of any previous Karma or *Vasana*; nor do they produce any *phala* or *Vasana* affecting the freedom of God. *c.f.* B. G. IV 6, 13 & 24 IX 9; Y. S. I, 24. See Appendix C. The saint that

to oneself. If a man should study the whole world or even gain it, of what use is it, unless he studies and masters himself? Even to get real knowledge of the world, one must know himself. Self-knowing is the chief duty and interest of man,—is wisdom. This is commonsense and the wisdom of philosophy.

This verse has a further significance. Maharshi is not teaching here Psychology and Philosophy of Religion, though what he teaches is connected with them. To learn such science or philosophy, one must pursue the well-known scientific methods of observation, experiment, framing of tentative hypotheses and checking the result of their application with well known facts with a view to correct or develop such hypotheses. Maharshi, on the other hand, is proceeding on different lines here. The ancient mystics of this land, the Rishis, pursued their scientific research, and applied their conclusions to reach the result they desired. The goal sought was bliss, the highest bliss welling up from within and forming the bottom layer or rather essence of man; and the method adopted was mystic introspection—which was no doubt based on certain Psychological and Philosophical truths about self, God and the Universe. The highest bliss was declared to be one's reaching identity with the Real substratum of the Universe and of oneself, described as Sat-Chit-Ananda. The process of reaching involved the affirmation of

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